undp

update

Published by the Division of Public Affairs
United Nations Development Programme
One UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017

Vol. 8, no. 9, 8 May 1995

UNDP and UNEP Sign Agreements on Desertification and on Computer Networking Programmes for Sustainable Development

Two important partnership agreements signed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will help combat desertification and increase the flow of information on sustainable development and the environment in developing countries. The two agreements were signed by James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the UNDP and by Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Executive Director of the UNEP. The signing ceremony took place at UNDP's headquarters in New York on 26 April.

"Both of these agreements address urgent areas of concern — the serious challenge of desertification and the growing need for computer networking information systems in developing countries," Mr. Speth said. "Equally important, they attest to the growing spirit of cooperation between UNEP and UNDP, and to a valuable partnership in areas of common concern."

Ms. Dowdeswell called the agreements important achievements which are mutually beneficial, and reiterated her enthusiasm about UNDP and UNEP collaborating further, saying that she

(Continued on page 2)

Sid Kane/UNDP

UNEP Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell and UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth following the signing ceremony.

The Netherlands Increases Its Contribution to UNDP's Trust Fund for Rwanda

The Government of The Netherlands will raise its support to Rwanda by US$16 million, which will be donated through UNDP's Trust Fund for Rwanda. The increase, which comes at a time when the European Union is rethinking its aid policy for Rwanda following the recent killings of some 2,000 Hutu refugees, bolsters UNDP's effort to rebuild that country's beleagured civil society. UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth praised the Government of The Netherlands for making this much needed contribution, which was announced by the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, during his visit to the United Nations in the last week of April. Mr. Pronk said that the $11 million, however, would be conditional upon the Rwandese government's respecting the human rights of all its citizens.

This brings The Netherlands' total contribution to UNDP activities for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Rwanda to $16 million ($5 million of which was pledged in November 1994).

The Trust Fund for Rwanda was established by UNDP to facilitate the

(Continued on page 2)

In this issue:

The Netherlands announces $11 million in aid for Rwanda — Latin American NGOs press for Social Summit follow-up — UNDP announces $195 million youth job training programme for Argentina

UNHCR

Shelter materials and water containers are among the most urgently needed supplies by Rwandan refugees.

Continued from page 1: Agreements

hoped "it wouldn't take another year to reach the next partnership agreement." The initiatives are the latest steps in implementing an agreement signed by Mr. Speth and Ms. Dowdeswell in April 1994 where they committed their respective programmes to work in closer collaboration.

The UNEP/UNDP Partnership to Combat Desertification is intended to ensure that the two organizations' work programmes, expertise and resources that are dedicated to this environmental threat are deployed in the most complementary and strategic of ways. Building on 15 years of joint experience with the Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO), the partnership will expand the drive against desertification and will seek additional support and resources from donors for joint programmes to be carried out in all affected regions. UNEP and UNDP "are committed to strengthening the collaborative effort in supporting activities to combat desertification, which we view as one of the principal barriers to food security and sustainable livelihoods in the world," the joint statement declares.

The second agreement is a memorandum of understanding between UNEP and UNDP that links their respective computer networking programmes which aim to deliver and exchange important data on sustainable development and the environment to users in all parts of the world. UNDP's Sustainable Development Network (SDN), which provides access and information to all parties concerned with sustainable development — including governments, NGOs, the private sector, universities and the media — now operates in 20 developing countries, with over 20 more under negotiation. UNEP's INFOTERRA has a worldwide computer network of 6,500 government designated institutions in 170 countries.

The agreement will help to ensure the cost-effective and efficient use of the limited funds for these programmes and will enhance coordination. It will also enable UNEP and UNDP to collaborate and share information systems and data, as well as to launch joint information projects in several countries, starting with Cameroon, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Tunisia. Most importantly, it will assist developing countries in obtaining the capacity to access computerized data on matters related to sustainable development.

Continued from page 1: The Netherlands

disbursement of funds for the following activities: restoration of the government's administrative abilities, including the reconstruction of public buildings; strengthening the judiciary; rehabilitating social services and assuring the resettlement and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons. The United Kingdom has also contributed the amount of $2.1 million to the Trust Fund.

Latin American NGOs Meet in Quito to Press for Social Summit Follow-Up

From 21-23 April, representatives from more than 80 Latin American non-governmental organizations convened in Quito, Ecuador under the auspices of UNDP and the Latin America Council of Social Sciences (CLASCO) to discuss ways to monitor the follow-up of agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development.

The meeting was the first regional NGO conference held to examine strategies for gauging future progress — at both the national and regional levels — of Social Summit proposals to fight poverty and improve living conditions for people in hard-pressed communities and urban areas in all parts of the world. More than a billion people, according to the World Bank, live in absolute poverty, surviving on $1 or less a day.

Delegates debated a regional agenda and action plan for assessing social development. The subsequent "Quito Proposal" was presented at a meeting of social ministers from Latin America that was be held last week in Buenos Aires. Issues discussed in the Quito meeting included: approaches to measuring and monitoring the agreements reached at the Social Summit; ways of improving coordination between government and civilian society in solving problems in the social sector; the need to modernize social institutions and ministries; the need for decentralizing social development plans from national capitals to local communities; and ways to develop new approaches to combat extreme poverty.

"In many ways the key to eradicating poverty, promoting job creation and integrating different social groups lies in the effective cooperation of governments with civil society, including NGOs and community-based groups," says Fernando Zumbado, UNDP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, who represented UNDP at the meeting. "It is not surprising at all for this region that its NGO community becomes the first in the world to respond to the Social Summit. For its part, UNDP will continue supporting the dialogue among NGOs, UN agencies and governments in Latin America."

Among the proposals discussed in Quito was one that called for the creation of national commissions that would establish and coordinate social development goals and priorities. A second proposal called for the creation of a regional coordinating secretariat that would integrate NGOs, governments and UN agencies to monitor social development progress and maintain a data bank on relevant indicators for the region.

UNDP and Argentina Announce New Job Training Programme for Youth to Help Offset Unemployment

An ambitious new initiative to create on-the-job training and employment opportunities for Argentine youth was recently approved by UNDP and the Government of Argentina, and is valued at $195 million. The project is the first operational phase of the country's $400 million "National Programme for Labour Reconversion" plan, and will seek to provide training in the next few years to some 200,000 youth. The overriding goal of the effort is to help Argentina reduce unemployment and meet its demand for qualified workers — especially in the wake of the country's structural adjustment programme which has reduced public sector deficits and inflation but has done little to redress skewed income distribution or unemployment levels.

The job training programme, the largest of its kind to be enacted in Argentina, is funded by an Inter-American Development Bank loan. It will train and provide internships to some 100,000 youths by the end of 1996. Another 100,000 will receive training in the project's second phase by 1998. It was largely inspired by a similar job training programme in neighbouring Chile, which is currently underway and which has provided employment training and skills to many Chilean youths.

UNDP has already played an active role in designing, implementing and monitoring essential components of the project, including the design and establishment of technical, administrative and accounting procedures that are needed to make its decentralized execution possible. The project encompasses training in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Tucumán, Mendoza, Neuquén, Santa Fe, Misiones, Santiago del Estero, Chaco, Formosa, Corrientes, Entre Rios, Chubut, Salta and Río Negro.

A $6 million pilot phase was launched by UNDP in 1993 and was successful in targeting and providing job training to the poorest segments of society: ninety-four per cent of the participants were unemployed, underemployed or had left the job market; ninety-two per cent had come from low-income families; and nearly half were women, many of whom received subsidies if they had small children. Approximately 60 per cent of the graduates of the pilot phase of the programme have so far found jobs.

Approved projects

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Iraq — Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Water Supply Facilities — UNDP will assist in the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural water supply systems — which suffered

serious damage during and after the Gulf crisis — in order to improve water quality standards for rural area inhabitants. Training for local personnel to operate and maintain water treatment plants will also be provided, and a national plan for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the rural water supply facilities will be drafted.

UNDP will contribute $891,600 for equipment, spare parts, consultants and training. (IRQ/94/001)

Iraq — Maintenance of Sewerage Facilities — A new project will assist the Baghdad Municipality in the rehabilitation and restoration of two major sewage treatment pumping stations in Baghdad, with the aim of halting the release of raw sewage in the Tigris River — a vital source of drinking water for Baghdad and other towns and villages. The initiative will assist in upgrading sewerage maintenance services through training programmes. Additionally, $226,000 in government cost-sharing is being added for the procurement of essential spare parts for Baghdad's garbage collection fleet, to help offset a growing public health hazard resulting from the inability of the Baghdad Municipality to collect city garbage on a daily basis. UNDP's contribution of $873,200 will be used for equipment, spare parts, consultants and training. (IRQ/94/002)

Iraq — Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People — This project will support vocational rehabilitation services in Iraq by organizing income-generating activities and by establishing vocational training for disabled persons. It's primary goal is to assist the disabled with finding suitable work in order to enhance their living standards. UNDP's contribution of $505,350 will be used for equipment and training activities. (IRQ/95/002)

Iraq — Human Development Data Updates — The project's objective is to develop a verifiable database of national human development indicators, needed for the production of an annual Human Development Report for Iraq.

UNDP contribution: IPF: $39,500 SPR: $26,000. (IRQ/95/006)

Editor: Sid Kane
Tel: (212) 906 5324 · Fax: (212) 906 5364

For change of address in all regions except Europe, contact:
Alison Walton in New York
Tel: (212) 906 5322 · Fax: (212) 906 5364

For change of European addresses, contact:
Marcel Renard in Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: (41 22) 979 9549 · Fax: (41 22) 979 9006

Printed on recycled paper

United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

UNITED NATIONS
1945-1995

NEW YORK MAY 15 95 NY
UNITED NATIONS
0032
PB METER 0015008
UN POSTAGE

A009